

Blood-Borne Pathogens Practice Policy

Background

Dental patients and dental health care personnel can be exposed to pathogenic microorganisms including cytomegalovirus (CMV), Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, herpes simplex virus types 1 and 2, HIV, Mycobacterium tuberculosis, staphylococci, streptococci, and other viruses and bacteria that colonize or infect the oral cavity and respiratory tract. These organisms can be transmitted in dental settings through the following ways:

- direct contact with blood, oral fluids, or other patient materials
- indirect contact with contaminated objects such as dental instruments, equipment, or environmental surfaces
- contact of conjunctival, nasal, or splatter which contain microorganisms generated from an infected person coughing, sneezing, or talking, and
- inhaling airborne microorganisms

Infection through any of these routes requires that certain conditions exist. The existence of these conditions provides the chain of infection. An effective infection control strategy prevents disease transmission by interrupting one or more links in the chain.

Policy

At Shasta College Dental Hygiene, work which exposes students to blood-borne pathogens is performed in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Blood borne Pathogens Standard (29 CFR 1910.1030). The OSHA Standard requires that the College develop a plan to protect dental hygiene students from blood-borne pathogens by reducing occupational exposure and providing appropriate treatment and counseling for employees potentially exposed to these pathogens. The plan covers all dental hygiene students who could reasonably anticipate contact with blood and other potentially infectious materials during the course of their training program.

Applicants for the Shasta College Dental Hygiene Program shall receive information in their application packets regarding the risks of exposure to blood-borne pathogens during the course of their training and career as a dental hygienist. Furthermore, the information shall include the responsibilities of a dental hygiene professional for the safety of their patients, themselves, and their co-workers through the use of appropriate safety procedures (Universal Precautions).

Prior to admission, dental hygiene students must complete the immunizations required for healthcare personnel including hepatitis B, Rubella and Rubeola, Varicella, and Diptheria/Tetanus. In addition, students will be required to have an annual TB screening and/or post-exposure.

Upon entry into the Shasta College Dental Hygiene program each student shall receive training regarding the procedures and policies that have been adopted by the department to reduce occupational exposure and provide for appropriate treatment and counseling as necessary should an exposure occur. Each student will receive a copy of the EXPOSURE CONTROL MANUAL.

Every student is expected to use “Universal Precautions” with every patient. “Universal Precautions” may be defined as the routine use with every patient of barrier protection such as gloves, masks, safety

glasses and fluid-resistant lab coats and the use of sterilization and disinfection methods for maintaining instruments and working surfaces which will not harbor the transmission of pathogens.

Student Self-Disclosure

The most recent guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control in regard to blood-borne infectious diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis B state that every healthcare worker who performs exposure-prone procedures (including scaling and root-planning) should know their own HIV and/or Hepatitis status. If the healthcare worker becomes positive for HIV or Hepatitis B, he/she must inform the governing professional body of the State. For dental hygienists in California, this is the State Board of Dental Examiners.

Patient's Legal Rights

Every patient has certain legal rights. Specifically, if a dental hygienist knows that she/he is HIV-positive but does not disclose this information to her/his patients before performing exposure-prone procedures, she/he has denied the patients their right to informed consent and may be liable in a court of law.

The Shasta College Dental Hygiene department does not intend to discriminate against any student with a blood-borne infectious disease. However, it is the department's intent to follow current CDC guidelines in order to insure the welfare of the patients who choose to obtain dental hygiene services through our program.

Patient Non-Discrimination

The Dental Hygiene Clinic at Shasta College routinely treats all patients for whom it is in their best interest to treat. Therefore, it is our legal, moral and ethical responsibility to include treatment of patients who may be HIV-positive, who may have Hepatitis B and who may have other infectious diseases.

Shasta College Dental Hygiene Program does not discriminate against these patients in any way, nor do we discriminate on the basis of race, creed, national origin, sexual orientation or religion. It is expected that all dental hygiene students treat patients with no display of hesitation, discrimination or aversion.